

Message Text

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42

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 ISO-00 ACDA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01 EB-07 TRSE-00 COM-02

NEA-06 /090 W

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R 061210Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4908

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PORT LOUIS 1016

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR MARR MP UK UR US IO

SUBJECT: BRITISH ADMIRAL QUESTIONS SOVIET PRESENCE IN
INDIAN OCEAN

1. DURING A THREE-DAY VISIT COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ROYAL NAVY ADMIRAL SIR TERRENCE LEWIN FRANKLY QUESTIONED THE SIZE OF THE SOVIET INDIAN OCEAN FLEET. IN A WIDELY REPORTED INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESS THAT SPARKED EDITORIAL COMMENT, SIR TERRENCE AFFIRMED THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DESIRES THAT THE INDIAN OCEAN REMAIN A ZONE OF PEACE AND HAS AIDED IN MAINTAINING THE PEACE IN THIS REGION FOR SEVERAL GENERATIONS. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, HE CONTINUED, HAS IMPORTANT INTERESTS IN THE IMPORTS THAT CROSS THE OCEAN. HE NOTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT MORE THAN 200 OIL TANKERS CROSSED THE INDIAN OCEAN TO EUROPE LAST YEAR. THE SOVIET UNION HAS RELATIVELY SMALL INTERESTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. THEIR COMMERCE, HE SAID, IS QTE NEGLIGIBLE UNQTE. THE ADMIRAL COMMENTED THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO COMPREHEND WHY THE SOVIET NAVY HAS 30 SHIPS OF

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WAR IN THE INDIAN OCEAN TO THE COMBINED US/UK TOTAL OF TEN

SHIPS. WHEN ASKED TO COMMENT ON BRITISH BASES, ADMIRAL LEWIN REPLIED THAT STRICTLY SPEAKING THE BRITISH NAVY HAS NO BASES AS SUCH IN THE INDIAN OCEAN BUT USES PORT FACILITIES IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES.

2. PRESS HAVE WIDELY SPECULATED THAT ADMIRAL LEWIN'S VISIT WAS TIMED TO DISCUSS HMS MAURITIUS PHASE-OUT AND DIEGO GARCIA WITH GOM. HIS OUT-SPOKEN COMMENTS ON THE SOVIET PRESENCE WERE TAKEN BY THE PRESS AS A WARNING AGAINST TOO DEEP AN INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SOVIET NAVY.

3. BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER SAID THAT TIMING OF VISIT WAS COINCIDENTAL.
HEATLEY

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